

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 8, 2011

Lisa Jackson, Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Ariel Rios Building
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Jackson,

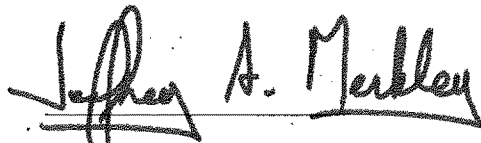
I am writing to support your Watershed Assessment of Bristol Bay, Alaska, which will help determine how future large-scale development projects could affect water quality and the salmon fishery. As you know, Bristol Bay houses one of the most productive salmon fisheries in the world and has been referred to as "America's fish basket." Therefore, it is essential to make sure future land use decisions account for the value of this ecosystem to Alaskans and the nation as a whole.

Over the last year, I have heard from a number of Oregonians who have emphasized the value of Bristol Bay to their livelihoods. Oregonians who depend on the Bay directly include 137 commercial fishing permit holders and their crews. In addition, dozens of Oregon chefs, restaurants, grocers, seafood processors, sport fishing businesses and sportsmen clubs have voiced their support for protecting this invaluable fishery.

I have always believed that policy should be guided by sound science and stakeholder input, and commend you for your proactive role in assessing the impacts that large-scale development could have on Bristol Bay. While development and progress are essential for a strong economy, it is also important to assess whether the costs of particular land use decisions outweigh the benefits.

Given that a number of Oregonians depend upon the resources provided by Bristol Bay, I would greatly appreciate any updates on your assessment. I look forward to following your progress and welcome you to contact me or my staff if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator